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Sustainable development

Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 72/217, provides a broad overview of the state of implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in small island developing States. It also contains a summary of the actions taken by Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international development partners to support small island developing States in their implementation efforts during the period 2017–2018. In that context, the strategies and frameworks employed to deliver development programmes are examined, and gaps, challenges, key results and achievements are highlighted. The report also includes an update on activities carried out in response to decisions and requests of the Assembly. The report was prepared on the basis of information received from Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, specialized agencies, regional commissions and relevant national, subregional and regional organizations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared in response to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 30 of its resolution 72/217, is divided into five sections. Sections I and V contain the introduction and conclusion, respectively. Section II provides a broad overview of the state of implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway) in small island developing States. Section III contains a summary of the actions taken by Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international development partners to support small island developing States in their implementation efforts during the period 2017–2018. In that section, the strategies and frameworks employed to deliver development programmes are examined, and gaps, challenges, key results and achievements of investments are highlighted. Section IV provides an update on the activities carried out in response to decisions and requests of the Assembly.[1] The present report was compiled using information solicited from Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, specialized agencies, regional commissions and relevant national, subregional and regional organizations, including through questionnaires.[2]

II. Overview

2. The Samoa Pathway was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/15 in November 2014. Nearly four years later, through various national and regional mechanisms and frameworks, and with the support of the international community, implementation in small island developing States continues, albeit at differing speeds. Efforts are being made to ensure the coherence and linkage of the Samoa Pathway with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed development agendas in order to enable small island developing States to maximize the benefits that they can derive from those mechanisms and frameworks.

3. Despite the challenge of geographical dispersion and the absence of a mechanism or framework to coordinate and drive implementation at the national and regional levels, the Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea regional group made progress in implementing several of the priority areas of the Samoa Pathway, including measures relating to climate change, sustainable energy, disaster risk reduction and food and nutrition security. One commendable achievement has been the preparation of national

[1] See General Assembly resolution 72/217, paras. 6, 20 and 30.

[2] Complete, unedited versions of the submissions received in response to the questionnaire used for the preparation of the present report are available at https://sidsnetwork.org/. Input was received from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Children's Fund, including its country team in Belize, the United Nations Development Programme and its office in Timor-Leste, the United Nations country team in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Trade Centre, the International Monetary Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and from the following Member States: Austria, Bahrain, Cuba, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Marshall Islands and Russian Federation. The submission of the Government of New Zealand was received after the deadline; its full, unedited version is also available online.

development plans[3] that show a high degree of alignment to the Samoa Pathway, the 2030 Agenda and other development agendas, including the African Union's Agenda 2063, thus fostering a systematic approach to implementation and reporting to the various frameworks that those countries have prioritized for implementation.

4. In the Caribbean, progress was made in areas including climate change and sea level rise, disaster risk reduction, waste management, health, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, energy and biodiversity resources. The United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (2017–2021)[4] represents the business plan for organizations of the United Nations system in the Caribbean and defines how they deliver assistance and achieve development results. The close alignment of the Framework to the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals has the additional benefit of contributing to national efforts to accelerate progress towards those commitments.

5. The pace of implementation in Caribbean small island developing States, however, continued to be slowed by weak economic growth and, in several countries, severe debt burdens. Those factors limit the fiscal space for investments in sustainable development programmes and projects. In addition, those countries have experienced losses equivalent to almost 1 per cent of gross domestic product and damage affecting an average of 1.5 per cent of the population. Over the past 60 years, 1,345 people in the Caribbean have lost their lives to natural disasters.[5] The region also grapples with high unemployment, underemployment and high youth unemployment rates. The impact of carbon tax and border tax adjustments on Caribbean trade in goods and services, increasing antimicrobial resistance and the threat of alien invasive species to biodiversity present further challenges. Caribbean small island developing States have nevertheless been exploring the potential of innovative financing methods, such as diaspora bonds, the blue economy and the New Development Bank, to help them to implement the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Pacific small island developing States have made significant strides in mainstreaming the Samoa Pathway into national and regional development plans, policies and programmes. Like the Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework in the Caribbean, the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018–2022[6] is the collective response of the United Nations system to the development priorities of Pacific small island developing States. It supports those States in advancing localized responses to the Samoa Pathway, the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed instruments. The Strategy is tailored to each country's national priorities and responds to the Pacific leaders' call to the United Nations system to align its work programmes and operations to support Pacific regional priorities. The commitment of the United Nations to engaging with key regional bodies, including the agencies of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, is also confirmed in the Strategy.

7. One noteworthy development in the Pacific region was the endorsement by Pacific leaders of the Pacific road map for the Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. The road map sets out the priorities of the region and includes a call for a systematic, coordinated and integrated approach to implementation, monitoring and reporting under the Samoa Pathway, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris

[3] National development plans have been prepared by the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Singapore and Sao Tome and Principe.

[4] The Framework comprises four priority areas: an inclusive, equitable and prosperous Caribbean; a healthy Caribbean; a cohesive, safe and just Caribbean; and a sustainable and resilient Caribbean.

[5] International Monetary Fund, "Caribbean small States: challenges of high debt and low growth" (2013). Available at: www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2013/022013a.pdf.

[6] Available at www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Final_UNPS_2018-2022_Pacific.pdf.

Agreement and the Addis Abba Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

8. Partnerships continue to be one means by which sustainable development commitments are realized in small island developing States. A recent analysis of 315 partnerships involving such States conducted by the Secretariat showed that, while more than 50 per cent of them are on track in terms of implementation, the partnership initiatives generally face challenges relating to the inadequate financial viability of projects as a result of size, political and policy nuances, the effects of climate change and natural disasters, and the severe financial debt burdens of small island developing States.[7]

III. Review of implementation of the Samoa Pathway

A. Implementation frameworks and strategies

9. The United Nations system and other international organizations generally employ a variety of frameworks and strategies to support the implementation of the Samoa Pathway at the national and regional levels in small island developing States. Those arrangements typically support oversight and the coordination of resource allocation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for technical programmes. The frameworks and strategies form the basis of engagements at either the bilateral or the regional level. Table 1 shows examples of such frameworks and strategies.

Table 1
Existing frameworks and strategies for implementation of the Samoa Pathway

Institution	*Modes of programme delivery*	*Frameworks and strategies*
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	5 regional offices and representatives in 5 offices	• Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 • Strategic framework 2016–2021 and biennial work programmes (2016–2017 and 2018–2019) • United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience • Regional disaster risk reduction strategies (Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific) • Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Regional and country offices	• Country or regional programmes agreed upon by respective Governments • United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018–2022) • United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project • Regional programme (support for CARICOM)

[7] United Nations, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, "Review of partnerships for small island developing States" (May 2018). Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18577Review_of_Partnerships_for_SIDS.pdf.

Institution	*Modes of programme delivery*	*Frameworks and strategies*
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Subprogramme 5: Africa, least developed countries and special programmes	• UNCTAD XIV outcome: Nairobi Maafikiano
United Nations Environment Programme	Office in Nairobi, subregional offices and specialized offices	• United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/4 • United Nations Environment Programme Medium-Term Strategy 2018–2021 • Programme of work 2018–2019
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	Special Unit on Countries with Special Needs, Subregional Office for the Pacific	• Asia-Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development • Pacific road map for the Sustainable Development Goals • ESCAP Pacific Strategy • ESCAP resolution 71/4 (Implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway)
United Nations Children's Fund	Regional offices	• MSDF
United Nations Development Programme	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support	• United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (United Nations Pacific Strategy, MSDF) • Mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support missions
United Nations Population Fund	Subregional office and UNFPA programme in Mauritius	• AIMS: UNFPA Programme in Mauritius • Pacific: UNFPA Subregional Office (Fiji) • Caribbean: subregional programme for the Caribbean (MSDF), CARICOM strategic plan
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Subregional offices and headquarters in Rome	• Global Action Programme • Programming framework for food security and nutrition in Atlantic and Indian Ocean small island developing States • Indian Ocean Commission Regional Food and Nutrition Security Programme • Country programme framework for 14 small island developing States in the Caribbean • CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan
International Telecommunication Union	Section dedicated to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States	• World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 action plan

Institution	*Modes of programme delivery*	*Frameworks and strategies*
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Section on Small Islands and Indigenous Knowledge	• UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2014–2021 • UNESCO programme and budget for 2016–2017 • Decision adopted by the Executive Board at its 201st session • UNESCO SIDS Action Plan (2016–2021) • Report on the further implementation of the SIDS Action Plan • UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on SIDS
International Trade Centre	Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean, Pacific and Africa	• ITC strategic plan 2018–2021 • Country programmes and projects (Alliances for Action)
International Monetary Fund	Interdepartmental working group on small States	• Staff guidance note on the Fund's engagement with small developing States
International Renewable Energy Agency	Headquarters in Abu Dhabi	• SIDS Lighthouses Initiative (multi-stakeholder platform)
International Organization for Migration	Office in New York	• Migration governance framework
Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century	Office in Paris	• Annual programme of work and budget (approved at Board meetings held in April each year)

Abbreviations: AIMS, Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas; CARICOM, Caribbean Community; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ITC, International Trade Centre; MSDF, United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

10. All of the frameworks and strategies shown in table 1 are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed sustainable development agendas and processes and are reflected in the respective work programmes of the organizations concerned. Specific examples include the following:

(a) The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has been supporting small island developing States with the development of national disaster risk reduction strategies and the alignment of existing ones with the priorities and targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The Office has also been championing coherence across the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the Samoa Pathway, which has resulted in the development of a number of national strategies that integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction;

(b) The Pacific road map for the Sustainable Development Goals of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provides a clear direction for implementing the 2030 Agenda in the context of the Samoa Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism;

(c) The Global Action Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is well aligned with the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda and is aimed at strengthening coordinated action in food and nutrition security at the national and regional levels in small island developing States;

(d) The International Telecommunication Union assists small island developing States in leveraging the power of information and communications technology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the development priorities identified for those States in the Samoa Pathway;

(e) The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has mapped the principles and objectives of its Migration Governance Framework against global commitments, including those outlined in the 2030 Agenda, to demonstrate how that organization's activities contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. In the case of bilateral development partners, various means are employed for engagement with small island developing States. Some partners have explicit instruments and policies specifically intended for small island developing States, such as the regional strategy of Germany for the Caribbean.[8] Others have acknowledged small island developing States more broadly in the context of their foreign policy and climate engagements. Ireland, for instance, reported that it utilizes the expertise of a network of staff drawn from a number of departments and units within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who possess a sound understanding of a range of issues and policies relevant to the Samoa Pathway and sustainable development. The network includes the Deputy Director of the United Nations Policy Unit, the Climate and Resilience Policy Lead in Irish Aid, the Sustainable Development Counsellor and First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations in New York. Other bilateral partners channel their support through multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, or through regional initiatives and institutions, and still others provide support through partnerships with multilateral providers. Austria, for example, channelled its support to the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative and to the creation of a network of regional sustainable energy promotion centres in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The funding provided by Austria also supports the partnership dialogue held in conjunction with the regional and interregional preparatory meetings for the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway.

12. A number of member States[9] that responded to the questionnaire used in the preparation of the present report confirmed that their national development plans were aligned to the Samoa Pathway, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Financing the Implementation of the Samoa Pathway in small island developing States

13. Achieving sustainable and climate-resilient development in small island developing States involves high costs. Those States face large development challenges that are directly attributable to their structural characteristics (small populations, spatial dispersion, remoteness); high perceived risks and low attractiveness to foreign investors; small and undiversified economies to generate foreign exchange, income and tax receipts; large recurrent costs; and, in some cases, high debt and little fiscal space for development investments. This complex set of

[8] Available at www.bmz.de/en/publications/archiv/type_of_publication/strategies/Strategiepapier311_11_2011.pdf.

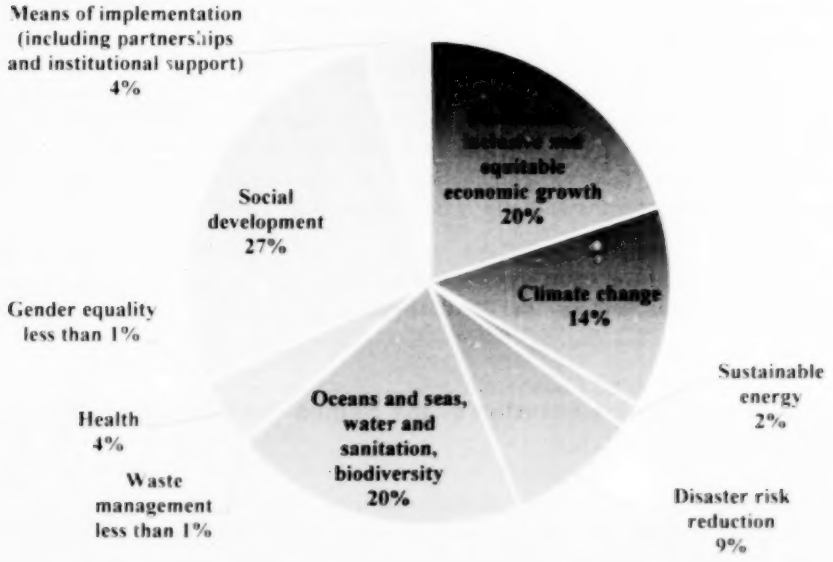
[9] Bahrain, Cuba, and the Marshall Islands.

challenges, which is exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change and variability, leads to higher levels of overall economic vulnerability in small island developing States than in larger countries with comparable income levels.

14. To achieve sustainable development, small island developing States need to invest resources in order to respond and build resilience to increasingly devastating natural disasters, rising sea levels and other impacts of climate change. New development models and solutions that can address their specific vulnerabilities need to be explored. Many small island developing States have already started to do this, demonstrating an ambition to exploit renewable energies to end their dependence on fossil fuels and to use their vast marine resources sustainably and innovatively to boost economic growth, employment and food security. Development partners can play a more enhanced role in helping small island developing States to secure resources and invest them in sustainable development. However, those States also face significant challenges in gaining access to and absorbing resources, and in using them more catalytically to leverage additional public and private resources.

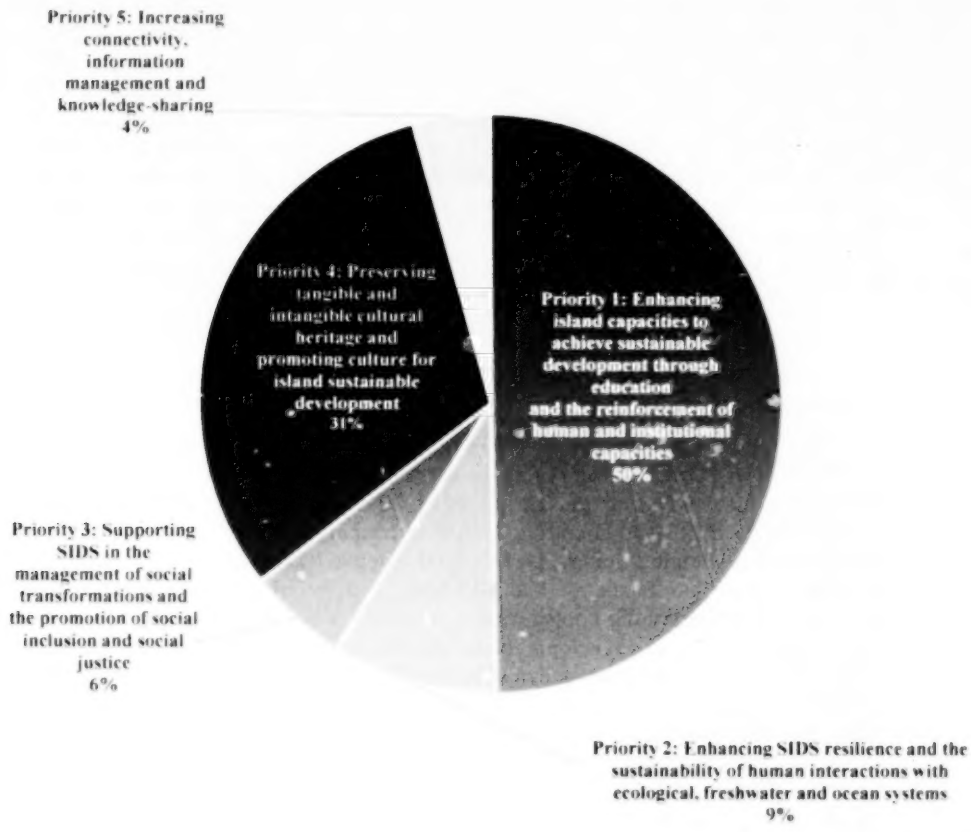
15. Financial support from multilateral development partners increased during the reporting period. In 2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) spent approximately $249.9 million, an increase of 18 per cent from 2016 ($210.6 million). Most of those resources were invested to support sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, oceans and seas, water and sanitation and biodiversity. Figure I shows the breakdown of UNDP investments in small island developing States.

Figure I
UNDP investments in small island developing States


Means of implementation (including partnerships and institutional support) 4%
Social development 27%
Gender equality less than 1%
Health 4%
Waste management less than 1%
Oceans and seas, water and sanitation, biodiversity 20%
Disaster risk reduction 9%
Sustainable energy 2%
Climate change 14%
equitable economic growth 20%

16. The budget allocations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to programmes for small island developing States also saw an increase from the 2016–2017 biennium to the current biennium (2018-2019). During the period 2016–2017, UNESCO invested $7.88 million in such programmes. Budget allocations for those programmes have now reached 20 per cent of the overall UNESCO budget and are distributed across the five priority areas shown in figure II.

Figure II
UNESCO budget allocations (2016-2017) for programmes to benefit small island developing States


Priority 5: Increasing connectivity, information management and knowledge-sharing 4%
Priority 4: Preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage and promoting culture for island sustainable development 31%
Priority 1: Enhancing island capacities to achieve sustainable development through education and the reinforcement of human and institutional capacities 50%
Priority 3: Supporting SIDS in the management of social transformations and the promotion of social inclusion and social justice 6%
Priority 2: Enhancing SIDS resilience and the sustainability of human interactions with ecological, freshwater and ocean systems 9%

17. As for other multilateral development partners, FAO invested $1.844 million in food and nutrition security in the Pacific. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) spent a total of $420,000 for Mauritius and $1.27 million for the Caribbean in 2017, in addition to $1.59 million for the Pacific in the period 2014–2017. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Belize spent a total of $210,000 on disaster risk reduction. The International Trade Centre (ITC) invested a total of $3.8 million[10] (8.26 per cent of its total budget) exclusively in small island developing States in 2017. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction promoted joint initiatives and partnerships to leverage resources to support programme implementation at the national and regional levels in small island developing States. UNESCO also relied on strategic partnerships to deliver cost-effective support to small island developing States. The breadth and reach of support from multilateral agencies varied according to the organizations' membership and mandates. Resources were mainly in the form of grants, which were invested in capacity-building projects, technical assistance and policy advisory services.

[10] Including expenditure to support Bahrain ($30,770).

Bilateral development partners

18. The financial support for small island developing States reported by bilateral development partners[11] during the period under review largely took the form of grant contributions, technical assistance, capacity-building and human resources development and was influenced by proximity, geopolitics and historical connections. The Russian Federation provided technical support and grant resources towards climate change and disaster risk reduction, including a contribution of $800,000 to Fiji to support its presidency of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Russian Federation also supported the Caribbean countries affected by hurricanes Irma and Maria, in particular Antigua and Barbuda ($200,000) and Cuba (1,133 tons of humanitarian goods). The Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation, in partnership with the International Civil Defence Organization, conducted a second regional course on emergency response development at the Russian-Cuban centre for the training of fire and rescue specialists in Havana in 2017. The course was designed for fire and rescue professionals in the Caribbean. Since 2016, the Russian Federation has continued to finance a UNDP project worth $7.5 million to strengthen the disaster risk reduction capacity of small island developing States in the Pacific.

19. The Global Environment Division of the International Cooperation Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan is the country's focal point for small island developing States. During the period 2015–2017, Japan provided ¥55 billion in support for Pacific island countries, including training for 5,000 professionals from small island developing States. At the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, held in Iwaki, Fukushima, Japan on 18 and 19 May 2018, Pacific leaders reaffirmed their commitment to continuing cooperation with Japan, which then pledged to continue Pacific human resources development and people-to-people exchanges for the period 2018–2020. In the Caribbean, Japan continued to promote cooperation with members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to reduce their vulnerabilities in the fields of the environment, disaster risk reduction, fisheries and energy. In African countries, including those belonging to the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas group, the assistance provided by Japan in the period 2016–2018 centred on developing quality infrastructure, promoting resilient health systems and laying the foundations for peace and stability. Those initiatives are being carried out through a public-private partnership involving a total investment of $30 billion.

20. The responsibility for managing the development cooperation projects of Germany in small island developing States lies with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The country's investments in the Caribbean have been directed towards climate change, sustainable energy and the oceans and seas. Some €2.3 million (0.027 per cent)[12] was invested under the climate-resilient and sustainable energy supply initiative in the Caribbean. During the reporting period, investments in marine protection projects under the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund and the management of aqua-terrestrial resources in projects under the Caribbean Aqua-Terrestrial Solutions programme totalled some €25 million (0.293 per cent) and €1 million (0.012 per cent), respectively. Germany also invested €3 million (0.035 per cent) in the development of sustainable financing structures and mechanisms for protected marine areas in small island developing States.

21. In 2017, Austria collaborated with UNIDO to facilitate the establishment of the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Tonga. In 2018,

[11] Austria, Germany, Ireland, Japan and the Russian Federation.

[12] The percentages represent the shares of the total budget of Germany invested in small island developing States priority areas in the past fiscal year.

Austria did the same in Barbados for the establishment of the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. To date, both institutions have carried out several capacity-building activities to promote sustainable energy in small island developing States. In 2016, sustainable energy programmes and projects in small island developing States accounted for 5.4 per cent of the total operating budget of the Austrian Development Cooperation programme.

22. Ireland reported that it has limited diplomatic accreditation to small island developing States, most being based in either Australia or New York. The country plans to open a new embassy in Wellington, which will increase its ability to deepen engagement across the Pacific. Ireland currently has a very small budget to support development cooperation in small island developing States. The country continues to make an annual donation of €50,000 to the trust fund to support the participation of the least developed countries and small island developing States in the Human Rights Council. A similar contribution was made to facilitate the engagement of small island developing States in the negotiations on a global compact on migration at the United Nations in 2017. Ireland also makes an annual contribution of €1.1 million to the Least Developed Countries Fund; 8 of the 47 least developed countries are small island developing States.

C. Intervention areas in small island developing States: results and achievements

23. As in previous years, interventions by international development partners in 2017 were generally concentrated in the following areas: (a) enhancing national capacities and institutions; (b) climate change and natural disasters; and (c) oceans and seas.

24. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction supported 14 small island developing States (7 in the Caribbean, 1 in the Pacific and 6 in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas group) in the use, development, maintenance and retrofitting of disaster loss databases, bringing the total number of Member States using the "DesInventar" disaster information management system to 99.[13] The system is used to build evidence on the vulnerabilities of small island developing States and gaps in disaster risk reduction and to guide the actions of their Governments in developing and monitoring their national disaster risk reduction and development strategies.

25. The work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in small island developing States resulted in effective resilience-building action in Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. For those countries, vulnerability profiles were developed in anticipation of the 2018 review of the list of least developed countries. Other outputs included sector-specific work aimed at supporting transformational progress and building economic resilience with regard to the fisheries and tourism sectors.

26. For the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the participation of small island developing States in the Clean Seas campaign[14] had a positive impact on global discussions for coordinated action on marine litter and microplastics. This led to the early ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which will enter into force on 1 January 2019. UNEP also provided technical assistance to strengthen the blue economy and green economy frameworks of small island developing States. In the area of climate

[13] As of April 2018.

[14] See www.cleanseas.org.

technology, UNEP supported the establishment of climate technology centres and networks and continues to support small island developing States in the sustained implementation of multilateral environmental agreements relating to chemicals and biodiversity.

27. The activities of ESCAP in the Pacific resulted in the mainstreaming of sustainable development priorities into national planning processes, the development of targeted fiscal policies and the appropriate alignment of budgetary processes. The organization also supported Pacific small island developing States in (a) implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through the development of appropriate subregional model legislation; (b) producing environment-related indicators through in-country application of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting; (c) identifying pertinent green finance instruments for use by small island developing States to enhance their readiness; (d) developing a common subregional position on the priority information and communications technology challenges through the Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiative; and (e) strengthening early warning systems in the Pacific through the development of geospatial data platforms (geo-portals) in Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

28. UNICEF developed guidelines to assist Pacific small island developing States in mainstreaming climate and disaster risk in policy frameworks relating to water, sanitation and hygiene. Governments were supported through capital and technical assistance programmes to enable communities, schools and health-care facilities to assess and manage risks to water and sanitation systems, improve overall preparedness and facilitate the construction of resilient communities at scale. Major activities in the Caribbean included improving the understanding of climate change and resilience through professional development in emergency preparedness and response for the Government and civil society in Belize, implementing disaster risk reduction programmes in schools in several provinces, which demonstrated its effectiveness during Hurricane Irma in Cuba, and initiating a climate landscape analysis for children study to examine the baseline situation of climate, energy and environment-related issues affecting children in Guyana.

29. In collaboration with other development partners, UNDP rolled out the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy (known as "MAPS") of the United Nations Development Group, under which UNDP initiated several missions to help countries to implement a more effective cross-thematic approach to the integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through those missions, UNDP supported small island developing States in achieving more with less by mainstreaming integrated approaches and allocating their limited human, financial, natural and economic resources to address their national priorities while making progress towards the Goals in their own national contexts. In 2016 and 2017, such missions were undertaken in the Comoros, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mauritius, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, and Aruba. By the end of 2018, missions to Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, the Federated States of Micronesia, Saint Lucia, and Samoa will have been carried out. UNDP also supported work in the areas of climate change and biodiversity in Guinea-Bissau; building capacity at the national and local levels to encourage low-carbon lifestyles, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction with seven other United Nations agencies in the Maldives; improving the sustainability of protected areas and monitoring six marine protected areas in Palau; disaster risk reduction, resilience building and supporting the implementation of the Low-Emission Capacity-Building Programme in Cabo Verde; and improving basic health care (Sustainable Development Goal 3) in Timor-Leste.

30. The United Nations country team in Guinea-Bissau worked with the respective focal points in various line ministries to mainstream the Samoa Pathway into the country's strategic and operational plan "Terra Ranka" for the period 2015–2020 and its vision "Sol Na Yarde" for the period 2015–2025. The capacities of more than 40 senior officials from key line ministries were strengthened. When completed, the exercise is expected to enable the development of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategic and operational plan, including appropriate national indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

31. In Mauritius, UNFPA helped to draft a national population policy that integrates evidence on population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health and HIV. Similar interventions were undertaken in Barbados and Dominica, where support was provided to integrate population dynamics into national development frameworks and strategies. As part of UNFPA assistance to countries affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, technical support was provided for the development of referral pathways for victims of gender-based violence to access essential services, and for the deployment of surge humanitarian experts in gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health to the affected countries. UNFPA also collaborated with Caribbean regional institutions (for example, the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS and the Pan American Health Organization) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to facilitate a regional dialogue for managers and service providers on integrating programmes and services relating to sexual and reproductive health and HIV.

32. FAO continued to support the implementation of the Global Action Programme in small island developing States through its Interregional Initiative, which comprises three subregional implementation plans (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas, Pacific and Caribbean) and an interregional component to foster knowledge exchange, South-South cooperation and engagement in global forums. FAO also developed a programming framework for food and nutrition security for small island developing States in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas to support those countries in responding adequately to the problems of food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. FAO also supported the formation of multi-stakeholder food and nutrition security councils in several Caribbean small island developing States to strengthen governance for food and nutrition security and to ensure effective follow-up at the national level. In the Caribbean, other achievements included the reinforcement of school feeding programmes as drivers for nutrition education and market access; parliamentarian involvement in food and nutrition security governance; sharing best practices in climate-smart agriculture, innovative technologies and youth employment opportunities for the agricultural sector and related industries; an alliance with academia and collection of evidence-based information to tackle chronic non-communicable diseases, obesity and food insecurity; and an alliance with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture in support of small farmers' organizations in nine small island developing States in the Caribbean.

33. ITU implemented numerous projects and activities in 2017 in relation to capacity-building, policies and regulations regarding information and communications technology, eCommerce, eGovernance, innovation, disaster risk management and emergency telecommunications, cybersecurity and connectivity.[15]

34. UNESCO carried out a wide variety of activities in the five priority areas of its SIDS Action Plan.[16] Focusing on system-wide policy and planning has enabled

[15] See www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/LDCs/Pages/SIDS_Projects.aspx.

[16] See https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/unesco_sids_events_2017.pdf.

several member States to complete the Education for All cycle and to mainstream Sustainable Development Goal 4 into national education sector plans and strategies. In the area of environmental, ocean, freshwater and natural resources sustainability, UNESCO continued to support many small island developing States in improving groundwater governance, adaptation to climate change, integrated water resource management and the provision of water services in the context of climate change. The support provided by UNESCO to small island developing States has bolstered their scientific understanding of ocean and coastal processes, enabling them to improve their management of human interactions with the ocean. Related to this is the development and implementation of policies for healthy ocean ecosystems in small island developing States[17] and support for the strengthening of institutional capacities for the sustainable management of ocean and coastal resources. UNESCO also supported work in the areas of disaster risk reduction, climate change, science, technology and innovation, social development, culture and data, and statistics.[18]

35. ITC reported that it had achieved expansion and replication of the Alliances for Action[19] approach to support the development of resilient value chains in the Caribbean, strengthened institutions and business support organizations, and reinforced the international competitiveness of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises by helping them to change their business operations through support and training.

36. The International Renewable Energy Agency enhanced local capacity in small island developing States through workshops designed to identify new project opportunities and explore practical steps to the development of bankable projects in 10 Pacific small island developing States.[20] The islands module of the Agency's Project Navigator was developed in 2017 to support project developers in the preparation of bankable renewable energy projects. National planning in small island developing States has been improved through the provision of targeted support for energy sector planning, such as grid integration studies and road map analysis. Information is regularly shared through the Agency's website (http://islands.irena.org/) to support the dissemination of information to small island developing States. Access to financing was provided through the International Renewable Energy Agency-Abu Dhabi Fund for Development Project Facility, which grants concessional loans to promising renewable energy projects over seven funding cycles. Of the 21 projects selected, 10 projects in small island developing States were provided with $111 million in funding. At the end of 2017, data from the Agency show that small island developing States that are partners in the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative currently account for more than 2.75 GW of total installed renewable energy capacity. More than 400 MW of renewable energy capacity was installed from 2014 to 2017. Small island developing States have already exceeded the solar photovoltaic power target of the Lighthouses Initiative, with over 250 MW installed from 2014 to 2017. The wind power target has also been exceeded, with over 50 MW installed in the same period. The resources mobilized in support of small island developing States have already exceeded the 2020 target of $500 million.

37. The work of the International Organization for Migration centres on emergency preparedness and response assistance and the implementation of its migration, environment and climate change portfolio. On climate change, the activities of IOM include the provision of support for strengthening evidence-based planning and policy

[17] See www.ioc-unesco.org/.

[18] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ExtractPDF.pl?catno=252788&lang=e&from=17&to=19&display=2&ts=1516874939.

[19] The Alliances for Action model engages smallholder farmers and micro-, small and medium-size enterprises in order to manage risk and facilitate networks that provide the required technical expertise, and targets catalytic investment to address systemic challenges.

[20] Fiji, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu.

development and promoting dialogue and the development of programmes to address human mobility in the context of environmental change, land degradation, natural disasters and climate change. As regards capacity-building, IOM contributed to enhancing policymakers' and practitioners' understanding of the links between migration, climate and the environment and provided them with information on how to address human mobility-related issues at the national, regional and international levels, including in climate change conventions and related negotiations.

38. In pursuit of its advocacy mandate, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States convened and participated in 17 events specifically relating to small island developing States during the reporting period. These included a high-level dialogue on oceans and small island States co-organized with the Alliance of Small Island States and the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative on the sidelines of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Ocean Conference), held in June 2017. The event resulted in announcements of voluntary commitments for small island developing States that directly contributed to the outcomes of the Conference. The Office of the High Representative also convened a two-day consultative meeting of small island developing States and their development partners to discuss how the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system can best support the efforts of those States in the context of the ongoing United Nations sustainable development reform processes as well as preparatory processes leading to the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway.

39. The support provided by the World Bank to small States was based on the following three pillars: (a) enhancing concessional financing to address vulnerability; (b) attracting private financing for small States and (c) building client capacity through flexible policies. The World Bank road map for engagement in small States, launched in 2017, lays out how the World Bank Group addresses the concerns of small States. Table 2 shows the specific efforts and activities of each pillar.

Table 2
Activities under the World Bank road map for engagement with small States

Enhancing concessional financing to address vulnerability
• Focusing on successful implementation of significant scaling-up of International Development Association funding • New debt sustainability framework for low-income countries that integrates vulnerability • Mobilizing climate finance and integrating resilience into development planning • Examining the links between vulnerability and concessional finance
Attracting private financing for small States
• Maximizing finance for development using new and existing platforms • Helping to address the negative impacts of de-risking on access to financial services • Supporting economic diversification with a focus on the blue economy and fisheries
Building client capacity through flexible policies
• Using World Bank financing instruments tailored to the needs of small States • Deploying the new procurement and safeguards framework for capacity support • Facilitating knowledge exchange for small States

40. The engagement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with small island developing States continued through its economic surveillance, programme support

and capacity development activities. On economic surveillance, IMF provided macroeconomic policy advice to small island developing States, thereby promoting the macroeconomic stability of individual countries and global economic and financial stability. Under the Fund's support programme, the financial needs of small island developing States are met through emergency financing facilities and instruments such as the Rapid Credit Facility and the Rapid Financing Instrument. The Fund's capacity-building activities contributed to assisting small island developing States in increasing their macroeconomic resilience and strengthening their institutional capacities in public financial management, tax policy and administration, banking sector supervision and central bank management, and statistics, among other areas. IMF also produced analytical work that strengthened the understanding of the economic challenges facing small States and helped to sharpen the organization's policy advice.[21] The staff guidance note on the Fund's engagement with small island developing States[22] was updated in January 2018. The Fund also plays a leading role in monitoring risks and advising its membership on policies to help to tackle the adverse impact of the withdrawal of correspondent banking relationships. Caribbean small island developing States in particular have been challenged by the disruption of those relationships. The role of IMF included facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, fostering an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon in the context of surveillance and financial sector assessment programmes, and providing technical assistance and training to help affected countries to enhance their monitoring of correspondent banking relationships and strengthen their legal, regulatory and supervisory frameworks. To achieve those objectives, IMF has been collaborating with various partners.

41. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century contributed to strengthening the statistical systems of small island developing States, in particular their national statistics offices. The organization's activities have helped to improve the status of national statistics offices and have facilitated enhanced cooperation and coordination between and among data producers and data users. This has resulted in improved engagement and, in some instances, strengthened partnerships for data production and use, as well as the identification of data gaps/needs relating to the monitoring and identification of priority areas for statistics development through the formulation of statistics strategies that are aligned with national development plans. Specific achievements include the development of new guidelines for National Strategies for the Development of Statistics for small island developing States 2018,[23] the formulation of the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics and assessments of the national statistical systems in Grenada, Jamaica and Fiji in 2017.

42. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century also facilitated the establishment of the annual round-table meeting of small island developing States on the sidelines of Statistical Commission meetings, co-hosted by the Partnership, the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Office of the High Representative in collaboration with CARICOM and the Pacific Community.

43. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States continued to

[21] See IMF, "Challenges in Correspondent Banking in the Small States of the Pacific", working paper WP/17/90; and "Loss of Correspondent Banking Relationships in the Caribbean: Trends, Impacts, and Policy Options", *Unleashing Growth and Strengthening Resilience in the Caribbean* (2017).

[22] Available at www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/01/26/pp121117-2017-staff-guidance-note-on-the-funds-engagement-with-small-developing-states.

[23] See http://paris21.org/news-center/news/release-new-nsds-guidelines-sids.

increase the number of private sector organizations joining the Global Business Network, an online platform and resource hub aimed at improving connections between entities in the national and regional private sectors of small island developing States, global businesses and other relevant stakeholders. Together with the Government of Mauritius, the Office of the High Representative hosted the third forum of the Global Business Network under the overarching theme "Strengthening private sector partnerships for sustainable tourism development" in Mauritius in May 2018. The forum addressed the links between tourism and other cross-cutting sectors such as cultural heritage, renewable energy, connectivity, sustainable oceans and finance, and concluded with the announcement of several new partnerships involving the private sector to support small island developing States in their implementation of the Samoa Pathway.

44. In 2017, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, co-hosted a high-level breakfast event during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, focusing on how to harness synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, with an emphasis on countries in special situations.[24] In November, during twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, also in collaboration with the Office, the President of the Conference (Fiji) and the incoming President of the twenty-fourth session (Poland), co-hosted a high-level event aimed at strengthening dialogue, encouraging coordination and renewing global focus on and attention to the need for coherent, enhanced action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, to address the losses and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.[25] In June 2018, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji and the National Engineering Research Centre for Juncao Technology of the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University of China, organized a capacity-building workshop on *juncao* technology in Nadi, Fiji, on the topic of achieving sustainable agriculture and the Sustainable Development Goals for Pacific small island developing States.

Member States[26]

45. In Bahrain, the Economic Vision 2030 and the Government's five-year action plan are aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The Marshall Islands has a national strategic plan that is updated every three years. The Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office of the Marshall Islands is the country's focal point for the Samoa Pathway and also oversees the implementation of the national strategic plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. To date, the country has seen the capacity of its government professionals enhanced through training and other programmes funded by the National Training Council, and it has achieved greener school environments through "clean school" programmes and by banning the use of plastic bags. The country is now in the final phases of developing a national strategic plan for the management of waste and hazardous waste, a national energy road map and five community resource management plans.

46. Cuba has a national plan for economic and social development that sets out the country's development goals for 2030. Cuba also has a national policy for combating climate change and has developed policies and action plans to address renewable

[24] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?page=view&nr=2481&type=13&menu=1634.

[25] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?page=view&nr=1373&type=230&menu=2059.

[26] In this subsection, the efforts of small island developing States that responded to the questionnaire, namely, Bahrain, Cuba and the Marshall Islands, are described.

energy and energy efficiency. Progress has also been made in women's empowerment and in improving the quality of the health system. Universal health coverage, including free health care for citizens, has been achieved and represents 20.3 per cent of the total current expenditure of the Government. In addition, Cuba is now the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to have met all the global objectives of the Education for All initiative.

D. Key challenges and gaps in small island developing States

47. While small island developing States face many common challenges, the differences among them indicate that tailored development approaches are required to meet their specific needs. At the same time, there is much scope for mutual learning across the geographical regions. Regional bodies such at the CARICOM secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat have been successful in bringing together countries in their regions to build expertise, exchange views and develop common policy options. No such regional body exists in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas group. This could be an opportunity for mutual learning.

48. The following is an overview of some of the specific challenges that have slowed the pace of implementation of the Samoa Pathway in small island developing States. The challenges can be grouped as follows:

(a) Weak legal and institutional capacities for effective governance;

(b) Inadequate data and statistics for monitoring and evaluation;

(c) Limited human and financial resources to support systematic implementation.

49. UNODC identified weak national governance mechanisms and corruption as a root cause of the weak development performance of Pacific small island developing States. In the Caribbean, limited access to funding and limited fiscal space for investment have been identified as key challenges to progress. Another limitation identified is that key donors often prefer to engage in bilateral cooperation rather than to pursue regional approaches to supporting countries. Better coordination between donors and implementing agencies could lead to more cost-efficient support delivered to small island developing States.

50. ESCAP often encountered operational challenges that reflect the structural barriers common in small island developing States, such as high transportation costs and limited information and communications technology infrastructure, which hampers the use of technology for virtual meetings as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Another challenge is the lack of appropriate national monitoring and evaluation frameworks for measuring progress and the lack of clear articulation of the links between the 2030 Agenda and public policies in the Pacific. To overcome this challenge, ESCAP has developed numerous regional sectoral frameworks and strategies to ensure coherence between the various processes and to identify convergence points and gaps.

51. UNICEF identified a variety of challenges, including major data gaps at the national level, which make it difficult to monitor progress against national and regional priorities; insufficient financial and human resources; a lack of strategies to change the public's attitude towards the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources; limited promotion of public-private partnerships as a means of leveraging additional financial resources; limited funding for training, in particular for personnel within government departments; a lack of educational materials to aid in public awareness, education and training; the challenge of harmonizing and synchronizing

individual sector plans and strategies; overlaps in sector plans, resulting in potential overlaps in legal mandates; a lack of timely reviews and evaluation of the planning process, resulting in inadequate feedback loops; limited resources and plans in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness to ensure coordination in mitigation across the various sectors, particularly for a level 3 emergency; and weak coordination by Governments for meetings among different partners for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway.

52. UNDP identified specific challenges by country (see table 3).

Table 3
Challenges identified by UNDP in specific countries

Country	*Challenges*
Cabo Verde	• Financing for development since graduating to status of middle income country
	• Limited national capacity to produce and use accurate statistical data, in particular environmental data
	• Links between data production and planning monitoring processes
Comoros	• Absence of a special unit for small island developing States/small island developing States legal framework
	• Lack of appropriation and communication on the Samoa Pathway strategy and implementation
	• Low capacity of human resources to mobilize resources
Guinea-Bissau[a]	• Political instability
	• Poor national capacity to produce accurate data
	• Communication constraints and/or absence of safe sea transportation
	• Absence of baseline indicators
Palau	• Low capacity of grantees, delayed implementation, results-based reporting
	• Need for stronger partnerships and better communication and linkage
Timor-Leste	• Lack of a clear commitment on the part of the national Government and lack of public understanding of the Samoa Pathway

[a] Also reported by the United Nations country team in Guinea-Bissau.

53. UNFPA mentioned similar constraints, citing the limited availability of human and financial resources at the national level and of relevant, quality data in the Caribbean region. Evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue are ongoing and require strategic investments to coherently address the gaps identified. In the Pacific, within the context of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, UNFPA identified a need to utilize existing demographic data more systematically and effectively to understand baselines and to conduct more accurate analyses of the issues affecting target populations, by age group, vulnerability group and sex.

54. In coordinating the implementation of the Global Action Programme, FAO reported that it had encountered the challenges of limited resources and available capacity at the national level. There were also challenges relating to the involvement

of regional and subregional institutions and a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the national level.

55. ITU encountered challenges relating to the limited financial resources of national governments to invest in information and communications technology, the limited collection of statistics on information and communications technology, and challenges in the effective and coordinated use of emergency telecommunications in rescue operations in the immediate aftermath of disasters. Potential solutions include the development of partnerships that could provide appropriate technical expertise, build institutional and human capacity, support infrastructure development, leverage additional financial resources and narrow the digital divide.

56. UNESCO encountered challenges associated with high turnover among senior government officials, which often lead to delays in programme implementation, limited human and financial resources and a lack of fast-tracked procedures that could support rapid and more effective action.

57. The International Renewable Energy Agency also encountered challenges relating to the limited capacity of national governments and a lack of data, or poor-quality data, for decision-making. Since small island developing States are faced with limited human capacity all along the renewable energy value chain, capacity-building efforts have to be increased to improve the skills of individuals and institutions.

58. The World Bank indicated that small island developing States continue to face challenges in accessing financing for development, particularly after natural disasters. The Bank has a new suite of financial instruments to support small island developing States, including the Contingent Development Policy Instrument, which allows countries to access contingent financing within 48 hours after the declaration of a national emergency. Insurance is a critical pillar of resilience and disaster risk financing, and in this regard the World Bank has helped to create and capitalize catastrophe risk pools in the Caribbean and the Pacific that disburse payments within one to two weeks following a disaster event. The Bank also offers capacity training on debt sustainability through workshops delivered in collaboration with IMF, as well as budget support packages, when necessary, in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank.

59. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century cited inadequate financing from both domestic and external sources to support any meaningful development and improvement in national statistical systems. Most small island developing States rely on external support to undertake critical statistical activities that would produce statistics for monitoring.

60. The challenges facing the Marshall Islands relate to limited human and financial resources for the implementation of planned priorities. The country has sought assistance to implement a number of its projects and activities and has been able to access international development assistance from multiple development partners, such as UNDP, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Global Environment Facility to implement key aspects of the Samoa Pathway.

61. For Cuba, the intensification of the commercial and financial economic blockade has had a negative impact on access to external financing. The blockade has created serious difficulties in access to the finance, technology, equipment, resources and technical knowledge required for sustainable development.

E. Partnerships for small island developing States

62. In a recent study[27] conducted by the Secretariat on the 315 partnerships for small island developing States registered on the SIDS Action Platform, it was noted that one third of the partnerships were largely devoted to the oceans and seas. Knowledge transfer comprised 25.7 per cent of the partnerships, followed by sustainable energy (13.7 per cent) and disaster risk reduction (13.3 per cent). Over 50 per cent of the partnerships are reported to be on track in terms of implementation. The analysis also revealed that the major challenges associated with partnerships involving small island developing States include inadequate financial viability owing to size and the adverse effects of political and policy nuances. The ever-increasing impact of climate change and financial debt burdens have also hindered implementation.

63. Recommendations for action include the greater involvement of young people in knowledge transfer, more community involvement in decision-making and project design, the use of traditional knowledge, the need to design sustainable energy projects to focus more on energy security over mitigation objectives, and the need to weigh the environmental losses from tourism against the economic benefits.

64. Responding to the questionnaire used in the preparation of the present report, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction indicated that it has been working to implement the following partnerships: Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization; scientific and technical advisory committees for disaster risk reduction in all regions; networks of private sector entities set up in each region; partnerships with city officials and local authorities in the context of the resilient cities campaign and the implementation of local disaster risk reduction plans; and partnerships with international financial institutions. ESCAP confirmed the establishment of the Ocean Accounts Partnership following a series of resolutions on the blue economy and oceans governance. UNFPA engaged in new partnerships with the Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation and the Jamaica Red Cross to facilitate the provision of life-saving items and services in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence prevention. FAO concluded letters of agreement with the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana to support sustainable school feeding programmes, address non-communicable diseases and establish a food and nutrition security institute in Guyana.

IV. Monitoring and follow-up

65. This section includes activities conducted during the reporting period in response to requests of the General Assembly.

High-level political forum on sustainable development 2018

66. The high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018 held a thematic review under the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies: SIDS perspective", during which it examined the issue of building island and community resilience through the lens of water and sustainable energy. Reducing poverty, triggering economic growth and building resilient societies require harnessing the potential of ecosystems to satisfy demand for water and energy, which are essential for life, health and well-being, and economic growth and development.

[27] Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18577Review_of_Partnerships_for_SIDS.pdf.

67. Of the 47 countries that volunteered to be reviewed and to present national reports in 2018, five were small island developing States, namely, the Bahamas, Cabo Verde, Jamaica, Kiribati and Singapore.[28]

Needs assessment

68. The Secretariat, on an exceptional basis, without setting a precedent and within existing resources, conducted a transparent and clearly substantiated needs assessment[29] of the Small Island Developing States Unit and the Small Island Developing States Subprogramme of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The Joint Inspection Unit found that resources had not increased over a period during which the mandates of the Small Island Developing States Unit and the Office of the High Representative had expanded significantly. The Joint Inspection Unit recommended a review to evaluate the current allocation of resources, as well as their effective and efficient use, with a view to improving governance and effective coordination in the delivery of the respective mandates. The report on the needs assessment will be submitted to the Assembly for consideration at its seventy-third session.

Coordination by the Secretariat

69. The Small Island Developing States Unit and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States[30] continued to take steps to strengthen the coordination and complementarity of their work in support of small island developing States through the following actions:

(a) Continuing to chair the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States on an alternating basis. A notable achievement was the adoption of the Group's terms of reference in September 2017;

(b) Joint organization of side events relating to small island developing States, convened during major United Nations conferences and meetings;

(c) Support for the work of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States, including the hosting of the annual global multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue; in response to paragraph 28 of General Assembly resolution 72/217, the two offices established a joint programme of work for the preparatory processes for the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway, scheduled for September 2019, and adopted joint plans for resource mobilization to finance those processes.

V. Conclusion

70. The United Nations system and other international bilateral and multilateral development partners continued to support the efforts of small island developing States in implementing the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the myriad of challenges they face, small island developing States continue to make progress. The international community must continue to deliver effective support and assistance to these vulnerable countries.

[28] Summaries of the national reports can be accessed at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018#vnrs.

[29] General Assembly resolution 72/217, para. 20.

[30] See also paragraphs 42 and 43.